

Bighorn Basin Resource Management Plan Revision Project

Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement

Lead Agency: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Type of Action: Administrative (Final)

Jurisdiction: Portions of Big Horn, Hot Springs, Park, and Washakie counties, Wyoming

Abstract: This Proposed Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) describes and analyzes alternatives for the planning and management of public lands and resources the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers in the Bighorn Basin in northwestern Wyoming. The Draft RMP and Draft EIS were released for public review and comment in April 2011 (76 Federal Register [FR] 22721, April 22, 2011). In July 2012, the BLM Rocky Mountain Regional Interdisciplinary Team identified the need to prepare a Supplement to the Bighorn Basin Draft RMP and Draft EIS (the Supplement) to consider incorporation of proposed management actions in designated greater sage-grouse Key Habitat Areas and Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMAs), and to thoroughly consider the conservation measures identified in the Greater Sage-grouse National Technical Team (NTT) Report on National Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Measures (Sage-grouse NTT 2011), as referenced in BLM IM No 2012-044 (BLM National Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy). The Supplement described and analyzed two additional alternatives (E and F) to address these issues.

The Proposed RMP and Final EIS integrate content from the Draft RMP and Draft EIS and the Supplement for the BLM Cody Field Office and BLM Worland Field Office (the Planning Area). The Planning Area is located in north-central Wyoming, and comprises approximately 5.6 million acres of land in Big Horn, Hot Springs, Park, and Washakie counties. Within the Planning Area, the BLM administers approximately 3.2 million acres of surface land and 4.2 million acres of federal mineral estate. The BLM is revising the three existing plans (the Cody, Washakie, and Grass Creek RMPs) under which the BLM Cody and Worland Field Offices operate to address the availability of new data and policies, emerging issues, and changing circumstances that have occurred during the approximately 20 years since the Records of Decision for the three existing plans were signed.

The Draft RMP and Draft EIS analyzed alternatives A through D, representing complete land use plans for managing the Planning Area. The Supplement analyzed management under Alternative E, which is the same as Alternative B, except it designates Key Habitat Areas for greater sage-grouse as the Greater Sage-Grouse Key Habitat Areas ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern); and management under Alternative F, which is the same as under Alternative D, except it designates PHMAs for greater sage-grouse as the Greater Sage-Grouse PHMAs ACEC. The BLM analyzed ACEC designations for greater sage-grouse priority habitat because this resource was found to meet the relevance and importance criteria that require its consideration as an ACEC.

After careful consideration of both public and internal comments received on the Draft RMP and Draft EIS and Supplement, adjustments and clarifications have been made to the document, including Alternative D. As modified, Alternative D is now presented as the Proposed RMP in the Final EIS.

Abstract

Protests: Protests must be postmarked or received no later than 30 days after publication of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*.

Refer to the instructions in the letter preceding this abstract for additional information on how to protest. The close of the protest period will be announced in news releases, newsletters, and on the project website at <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/programs/Planning/rmps/bighorn.html>.

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